**U.S. UPR Intervention for Congo, 17th Session, October 30, 2013**

The United States welcomes the Republic of the Congo and thanks it for completion of its national report and for its presentation today.

We commend the progress made by the Republic of the Congo to strengthen its judicial system, including taking steps to improve prison conditions. We recognize the ongoing challenges of increasing transparency in the justice sector and reducing overcrowding in prisons. The government should take additional steps to reduce the length of pretrial detention, increase the independence of the justice system, and end arbitrary arrests.

We acknowledge efforts made by the Republic of the Congo to combat violence and discrimination against women. However, these efforts could be strengthened by including a provision in domestic legislation to define discrimination against women. In addition, we are concerned about ongoing violence against women and girls, especially in rural areas, and about children’s vulnerability to physical and sexual abuse. Additional training for law enforcement, health care, and legal professionals on preventing and responding to gender-based violence would enhance the Republic of Congo’s ability to address gender based violence and provide care for victims.

Bearing in mind these concerns, we recommend that the Republic of the Congo:

1. Enact legislation allowing human rights NGOs to monitor and visit detention centers;

2. Enact legislation establishing a clear definition of discrimination against women;

3. Create a system, to include training for law enforcement and healthcare personnel, for providing legal and medical aid to survivors of gender-based violence, including rape and sexual violence, domestic violence, and female genital mutilation.